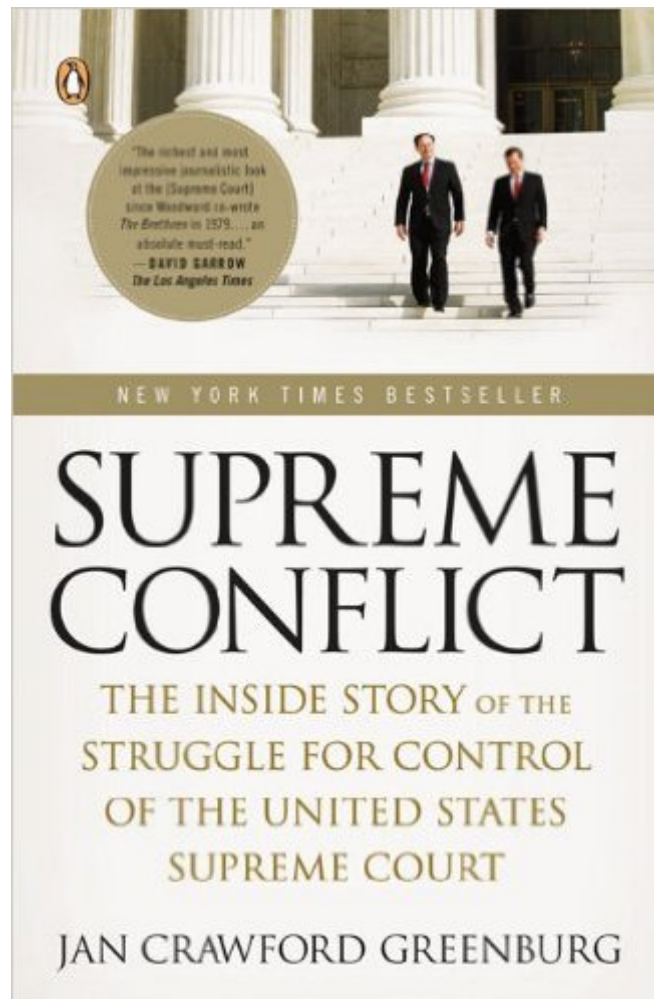


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Supreme Conflict: The Inside Story Of The Struggle For Control Of The United States Supreme Court



Synopsis

Drawing on unprecedented access to the Supreme Court justices themselves and their inner circles, acclaimed ABC News legal correspondent Jan Crawford Greenburg offers an explosive newsbreaking account of one of the most momentous political watersheds in American history. From the series of Republican nominations that proved deeply frustrating to conservatives to the decades of bruising battles that led to the rise of Justices Roberts and Alito, this is the authoritative story of the conservative effort to shift the direction of the high court—a revelatory look at one of the central fronts of America's culture wars by one of the most widely respected experts on the subject.

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Customer Reviews

This is just a terrific book on the recent Supreme Court. The author, a graduate of the University of Chicago Law School, currently is a correspondent for ABC News, and for many years covered the Court for the Chicago Tribune. The author develops a dual focus in her analysis. First, she looks at how certain key Justices were selected for nomination to the Court. Those Justices include Souter, Kennedy, Thomas, O'Connor, Scalia, Miers, Roberts and Alito. She also covers the Bork nomination. Particularly interesting in this regard, and the "struggle for control" of the Court she sees continually occurring, is the conservative paranoia that true believer conservatives only must be nominated by GOP Presidents, individuals who will unlike Souter, Blackmun, Kennedy, and O'Connor for example, never deviate from a firm conservative outlook no matter what seductive influences (such as the New York Times and the Georgetown cocktail circuit) impact upon them. The

author well documents that the Federalist Society and other judicial conservative groups felt themselves continually betrayed as one after another Justice moved to a more moderate position despite having appeared to be a firmly-fixed Scalia/Thomas type conservative. The internal struggle in GOP White Houses with these groups and the process of selection itself are superbly discussed, based primarily it appears upon the author's extensive interviewing, the Blackmun papers, and documentation at various Presidential libraries (especially the Reagan facility). The second focus of the book is equally fascinating. Here the author analyzes the struggle within the Court for dominance, the process of coalition building, the strategies of inter-Justice persuasion, and the role of Justice personality in the mix.

Jan Crawford Greenburg traces the history of conservatives to re-shape the court beginning with President Reagan and moving through the confirmation of Justice Alito. The author obviously had access to a number of sources as well as the notes of Justice Blackmun. She is able to tell a complete narrative both inside the Supreme Court and inside the White House as candidates for nomination to the bench are debated, prepared, etc. She devotes more space to conservative administrations and justices but this seems due to the nature of the narrative she is attempting to construct rather than an attempt to slight anyone. This book methodically traces the successes and failures of the nomination process. There were enough contentious and controversial proceedings to provide plenty of grist for the mill and plenty of behind the scenes details that display the thought processes going into each nomination. There is also a nice level of background information on the nominee so that you begin to see them as real people, and not just the shallow caricatures that the media typically portrays. Some may be disappointed by a relative lack of detail in the Clarence Thomas confirmation hearings but I would say she hit it just about right. That widely publicized mess could fill an entire book and is not central to the story she is attempting to tell. She discusses it enough to make clear what a firestorm it was and then moves on. Once each person makes it onto the court, she walks us through the impact that they had on the group dynamic. One of the most fascinating aspects of the book is how one justice may affect another to change that group dynamic. Once again, we are presented with justices as human beings with normal thoughts and emotions.

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